# **Charts From Federal Data Sources**

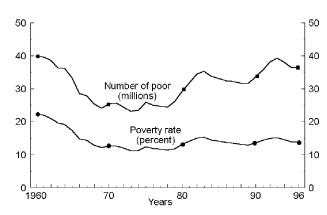
# **Poverty in the United States**

The number of people in the United States in poverty shows the economic well-being of the Nation as well as the economic well-being of the people. U.S. poverty thresholds were originally based on the USDA's economy (now called thrifty) food plan and amounted to \$16,029 for a family of four in 1996. Poverty rates vary over time, by State and family characteristics, and the same people do not remain poor year after year.

## **Poverty rates over time:**

In 1996, 13.7 percent of the U.S. population—36.5 million people—were in poverty. This represents a slight increase from the 1990 figure of 13.5 percent but a significant decrease from the 1960 figure of 22.2 percent (39.9 million people). After 1960, many government programs were instituted to combat poverty.

# Percent and number of persons in poverty in the United States over time

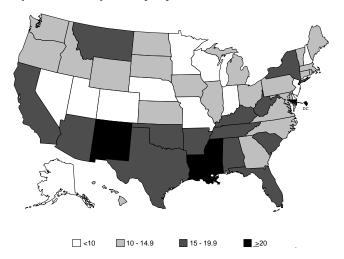


Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Surveys.

#### **Poverty rates vary by State:**

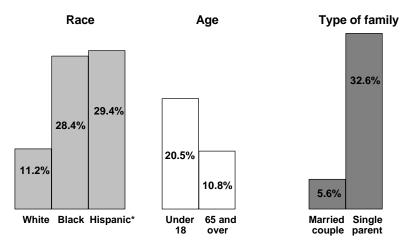
Poverty rates vary considerably among States. During the 1995-96 period, 12 States had a poverty rate below 10 percent and 3 States plus the District of Columbia had a poverty rate of 20 percent and above. New Hampshire had the lowest poverty rate (5.9 percent) and New Mexico, the highest (25.4 percent).

## Percent of persons in poverty by State, 1995-96



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Surveys.

## Poverty rates by selected family characteristics, 1996



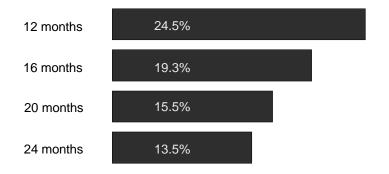
#### \*May be of any race.

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Surveys.

# Rates also vary by family characteristics:

Poverty rates vary by family characteristics. Black and Hispanic persons have poverty rates over twice that of White persons. Children and teens are twice as likely to be poor than elderly persons are—1 in 5 children or teens in the United States are poor compared with 1 in 10 elderly persons. Singleparent families have one of the highest poverty rates. One-third of single-parent families are in poverty, compared with 5.6 percent of married-couple families.

#### Percent of persons poor during 1992, still poor after ...



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Survey of Income and Participation.

# Same people, however, do not remain in poverty:

People move in and out of poverty. The same people who are poor one year are not necessarily poor the next year. Of people poor during 1992, 24.5 percent were still poor 12 months later, and only 13.5 percent were poor 24 months later. Although people move in and out of poverty, certain groups (Blacks, Hispanics, children, and single-parent families) have relatively high poverty rates over time.

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